AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Below is the entire set of pending claims pursuant to 37 C.F.R §1.121(c)(3)(i), with any mark-ups showing the changes made by the present Amendment.

1 to 64 (Canceled)

65. (New) A plug fastener, comprising:

a first hemispheroidal portion;

a second hemispheroidal portion opposed to the first hemispheroidal portion, the first and second hemispheroidal portions defining a plane of symmetry at their plane of opposition, each hemispheroidal portion comprising:

a mating surface truncating the respective hemispheroidal portion, the mating surface defining a mating plane that is parallel to the plane of symmetry whereby the mating planes of the respective first and second hemispheroidal portions are opposite from each other across the plane of symmetry, and

ridges extending outwardly from the respective hemispheroidal portion between the mating surfaces and the plane of symmetry; and

an aperture defined within and extending through the first and second hemispheroidal portions, the aperture having a first countersink defined within an opening in the first mating surface and a second countersink defined within an opening in the second mating surface.

66. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the ridges are deformable ridges.

67. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein one of the mating surfaces is adapted to be affixed to a flat surface of a railing.

68. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 67, wherein the plug fastener is adapted to be affixed to be received within a baluster to be attached to the railing.

69. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 68, wherein ridges are deformable ridges and have resiliency sufficient to frictionally engage an interior surface within an opening in the baluster such that the baluster is substantially fixed with respect to railing.

70. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 68, wherein the plug fastener is adapted to be hidden from view after the baluster is attached to the railing.

71. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 67, wherein the aperture is adapted to receive an elongate fastener to affix the plug fastener to the railing.

72. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 71, wherein the fastener is a screw.

73. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the ridges on the first hemispheroidal portion are directed towards the ridges on the second hemispheroidal portion.

74. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the ridges have a substantially triangular shape.

75. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the plug fastener is non-metallic.

76. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 75, wherein the plug fastener comprises a material selected from the group consisting of plastic, nylon, polyvinyl chloride, synthetic rubber, and polyurethane.

77. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the ridges outwardly extend from corresponding exterior surfaces of the hemispheroidal portions.

78. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 77, wherein the ridges outwardly extending from the exterior surfaces of the hemispheroidal portions define a substantially spherical shape for the plug fastener.

79. (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the first and second hemispheroidal portions define a substantially spherical shape.

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~~81.~~ 80 (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the aperture is substantially cylindrical between the countersinks.

~~82.~~ 81 (New) A plug fastener according to claim 65, wherein the aperture is substantially perpendicular with respect to the plane of symmetry.